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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002714

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

JUSTICE FOR JJONES, ANORMAN, TBARTLETT, BSWARTZ  
STATE FOR NEA/I, INL/I

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV KJUS I2

SUBJECT: DISTURBANCE AT BAGHDAD CENTRAL PRISON LEADS TO  
ACTIVATION OF CHAMCHAMAL PRISON.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In the aftermath of a disturbance at Baghdad Central Prison (formerly Abu Ghraib) on September 10, the US Embassy and MNF-I facilitated the Ministry of Justice's transfer of 2,630 inmates and 273 Iraqi Correctional officers (ICOs) to the recently completed USG funded Chamchamal Prison in Sulaymaniyah. Despite the successful activation of Chamchamal Prison, the ICS still faces challenges in fully receiving support services from the GOI for sustained, normal operations. END SUMMARY

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Rioting Closes Baghdad Central Prison  
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¶2. (SBU) The disturbance at Baghdad Central Prison (BCP) began about noon on September 10, 2009, when a team of ICOs initiated a contraband inspection of the cells. As the ICOs confiscated cell phones and other contraband, the inmates became agitated and forced the ICOs from the cellblocks under threat of attack. Within two hours the situation deteriorated and inmates began burning several sections of the facility. The warden requested assistance from the Iraqi Army (IA) to quell the disturbance. Internal and external security was subsequently provided by the IA and the IA and the prison's ICOs regained control of the situation. The Director General of Corrections reported that BCP was back under control but not before numerous inmates and ICOs suffered injuries. In the early hours of September 11, inmates began to riot again and took over the facility. The Deputy Director General of Corrections (DDG) arrived at the prison offered to hear the prisoners grievances, but only after they returned to their cells. Once the prison was under control again, the ICS transferred approximately 1,600 inmates to several ICS prisons in the Baghdad area.

¶3. (SBU) According to the Deputy MOJ, 15 ICOs were injured and 5 were hospitalized during the riot. He also knew that 4 inmates were injured but there may have been more. No deaths were reported.

(COMMENT: There was no confirmation of these numbers until many of these inmates were transferred to Rusafa Prison Complex where ICITAP corrections advisors were able to assess the condition of 998 inmates. Thirty-six inmates were evaluated by ICS medical staff. All had non-life threatening injuries: 10 suffered indirect gunfire wounds from ricochets, 12 sustained cuts from sharp objects, and 14 had minor injuries. END COMMENT)

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOI reopened Baghdad Central Prison (BCP), run by the Iraqi Correctional Service (ICS) in the Ministry of Justice, on November 28,

2008 with the first transfer of 87 post-trial inmates. The prison was renovated, staffed, and activated entirely by the ICS without any USG support. The activation of BCP demonstrated ICS capacity to develop plans and programs for their prisons. END COMMENT

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Developing a Remediation Plan  
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15. (SBU) Minister of Justice (MOJ) Dara Noor Al Deen and Deputy Minister of Justice Posho Ibrahim met with Embassy Rule of Law (ROL) staff on September 12 to discuss the situation. The MOJ advised that the ICS had transferred approximately 1600 inmates to other ICS prisons, and requested USG assistance in transferring the remaining 1,050 inmates to coalition facilities. Due to the imminent closure of Bucca and the lack of available beds at the Taji and Cropper facilities, ROL recommended the MOJ activate Chamchamal Ofacilities, ROL recommended the MOJ activate Chamchamal Prison. The MOJ agreed and requested assistance in transferring the remaining 1,050 inmates still in BCP. (COMMENT: Chamchamal Prison, located in Sulaymaniyah Province, is a 32 million dollar Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) funded prison construction project built to expand prison bed space in Iraq. The project was completed and turned over to the GOI in March 2009. END COMMENT)

16. (SBU) On September 13, the MNF-I Deputy Commanding General, TF-134 Commanding General and ROL met with the Deputy MOJ, who requested that all of the BCP

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inmates (approximately 2,630) be transferred to Chamchamal Prison by USG forces. At that time, there were over 2,600 BCP inmates housed in four separate ICS prisons in Baghdad that coalition forces agreed to transfer to Chamchamal.

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Emergency Activation of Chamchamal Prison  
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17. (SBU) Significant coordination between the ICS, ICITAP, and Task Force 134 was required to begin the inmate and ICO transfers to Chamchamal. The ICS Deputy Director General (DDG), who negotiated with the BCP inmates during the uprising, led the initial ICO transfer to Chamchamal. The first US military aircraft dedicated to the activation mission departed BIAP with the DDG and 41 ICOs from Baghdad on September 17 to Sulaymaniyah Airport where the ICOs were then bused to the Chamchamal prison. Utilizing two flights per day over two days, coalition aircraft moved 243 ICOs to Chamchamal. Inmate transfers on US military aircraft began on September 19. Coordinating with the Ministry of Transportation for use of buses, the ICS began scheduling inmates for transfer to BIAP for loading onto military aircraft. The ICS first bused inmates from BCP, followed by the remaining inmates originally from BCP who were moved to three other ICS prisons in the Baghdad area. On September 26, the final group of BCP inmates were transferred and received at Chamchamal Prison. A total of 2,630 inmates and 273 ICOs were transferred over 10 days of flights provided by the USG.

18. (SBU) For several months, an INL-funded ICITAP Corrections Advisory Team had been on site at Chamchamal with approximately 20 ICOs in anticipation of the activation of the facility. The Corrections Advisory Team helped to prepare the ICS staff for the receipt of the BCP inmates. The emergency activation was challenging not only in the movement of staff and

inmates, but also in activating, opening and developing support services for the new Chamchamal prison.

¶19. (SBU) Due to the lack of an activation budget, the ICS was ill-prepared to receive inmates at Chamchamal. There were few inmate care items, but in daily meetings with TF-134, ICITAP management raised these items (mattresses, clothing, and personal hygiene items) for possible resolution. Over a seven day period, USG military forces were able to assemble and provide 12 CONEX containers of inmate care items for Chamchamal to provide all basic care items for inmates by September 25.

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Challenges Ahead: A Test of ICS Capability

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¶10. (SBU) There are still several major challenges at Chamchamal Prison to ensure fundamental support and to establish a normal routine for a correctional facility. The DDG is on site in Chamchamal working with the Chamchamal Directorate of Electricity to connect the facility to the local electrical grid. Meanwhile, the prison is receiving power from four generators within the prison. Some inmates need medications and medical examinations. Medical personnel from the Chamchamal Ministry of Health office have been asked to dedicate staff to the facility on a 24-hour basis. A food contractor is adjusting and using the kitchen facility in the prison to timely provide quality food for all the detainees and ICOs. Hiring additional support personnel from the local community and staging for personnel from the local community and staging for expedited training will begin this week. Given that the ICS has a very limited budget, on-going meetings with MOJ and ICS executive staff will focus on building sustainable operations.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: The future of Baghdad Central Prison is uncertain, as it is likely to now become a low priority for the MOJ. The MOJ's current budget situation will not support an immediate repair and renovation of Baghdad Central Prison. All funding currently available will most likely be diverted to meet the needs of the Chamchamal activation.

END COMMENT.

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